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AMAR CHITRA KATHA

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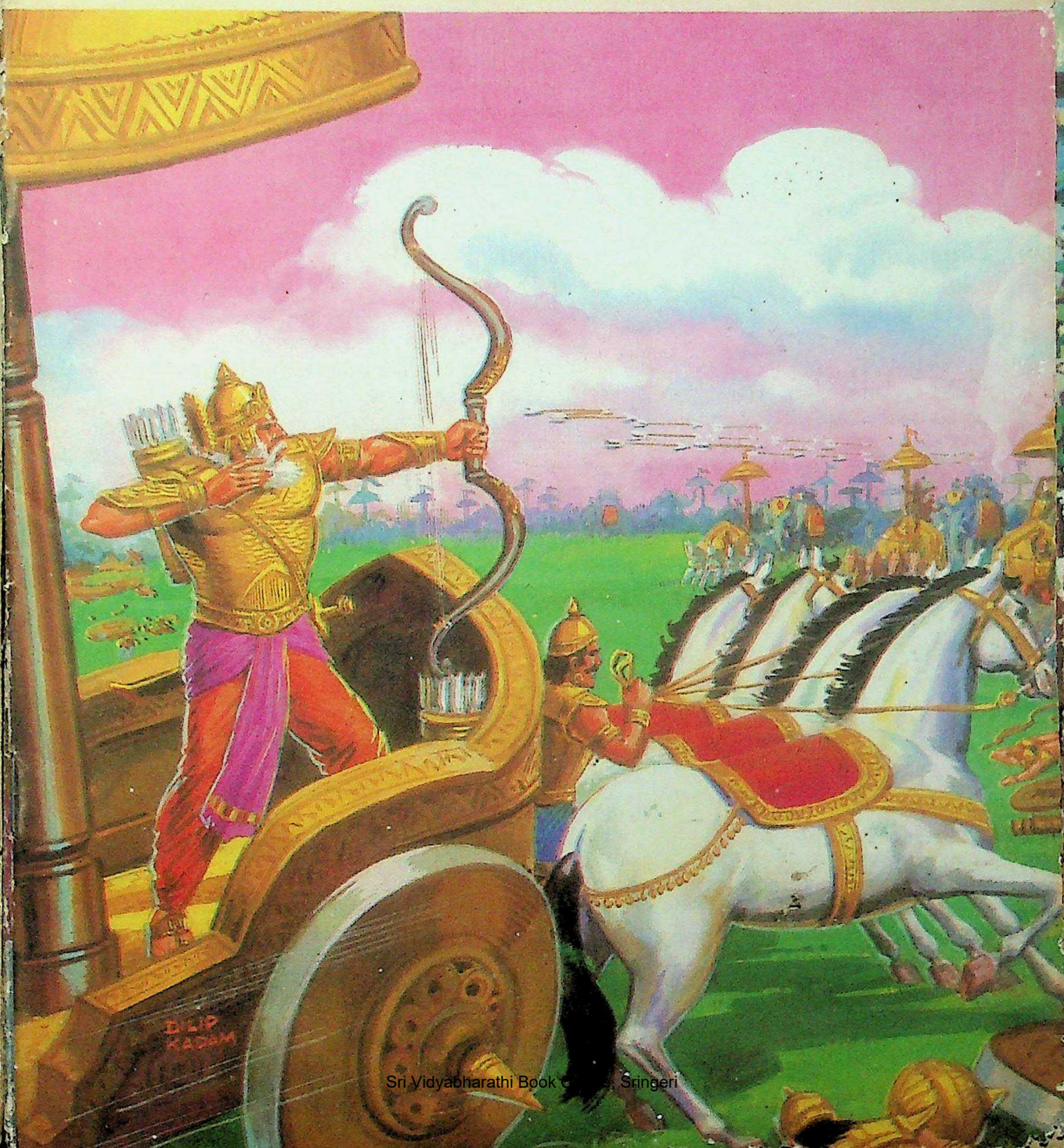
Mahabharata-31

BHEESHMA IN COMMAND



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Amar Chitra Katha
No.389, September 15, 1987

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The recital took place in the august presence of King Janamejaya—great grandson of Vyasa—and the many learned sages who had assembled for Janamejaya's Sarpa Satra (a 12-year-long snake sacrifice).

The thirteeth session of our rendering of the Mahabharata described the final preparations for the war which had become inevitable following the failure of Krishna's mission of peace. As the opposing forces were arranged for combat, Arjuna filled with despair, shrank back from war in which he thought he would kill his kith and kin. Krishna expounded to him the philosophy of the Gita and exhorted him to follow his dharma as a Kshatriya and fight.

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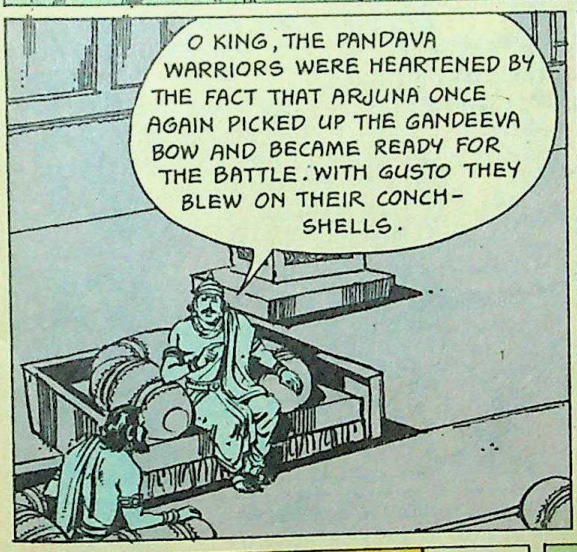

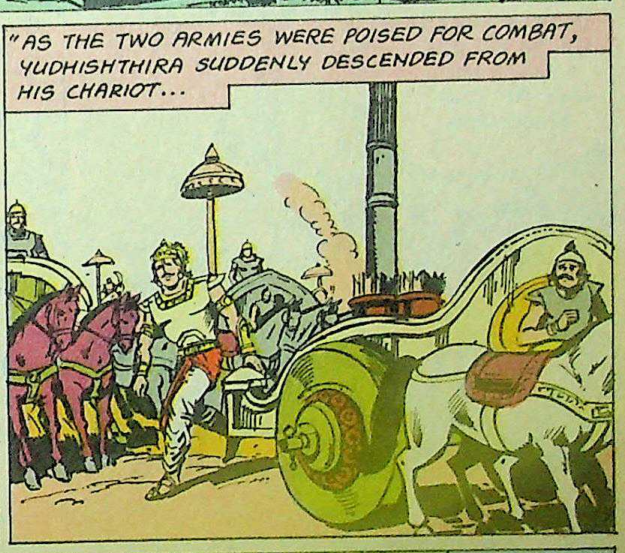

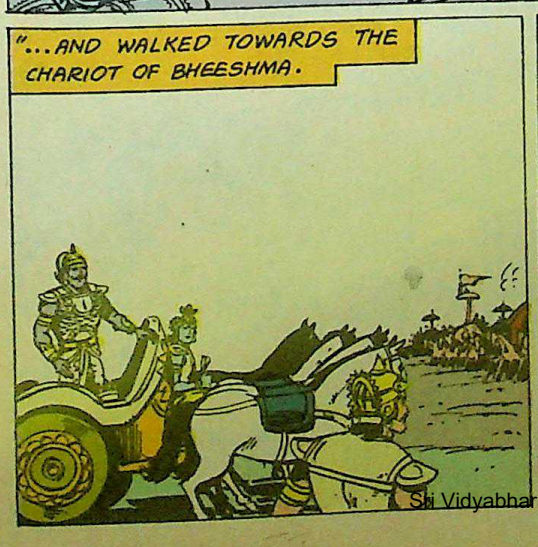

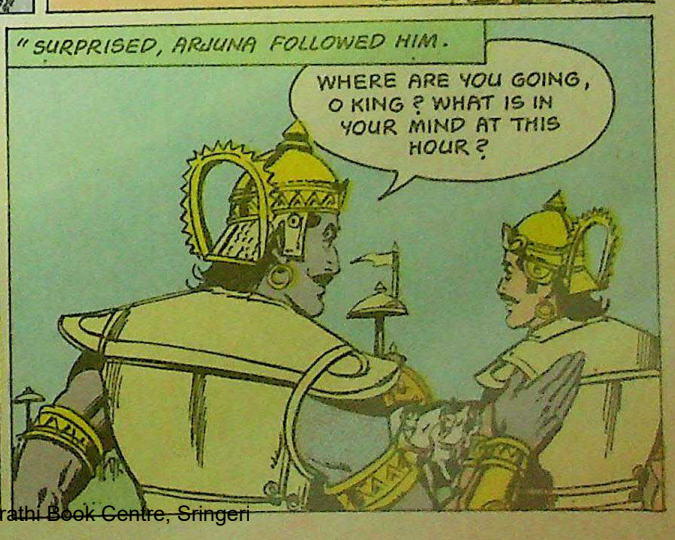

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"YUYUTSU, ONE OF DURYODHANA'S BROTHERS, SPOKE UP.

O KING, IF YOU WILL ACCEPT ME, I WILL JOIN YOU.

YOU ARE WELCOME, YUYUTSU.

"THE WAR DRUMS, THE TRUMPETING OF THE ELEPHANTS, THE NEIGHING OF THE HORSES AND THE BLOWING OF THE CONCH-SHELLS MADE A FEARSOME NOISE.

"THE TWO ARMIES FELL UPON EACH OTHER.

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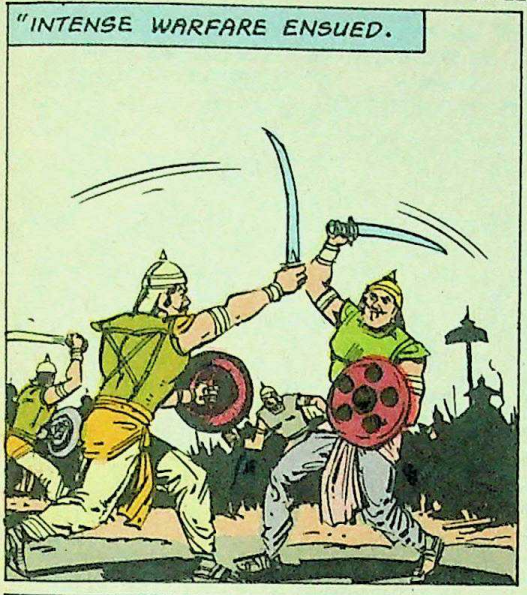

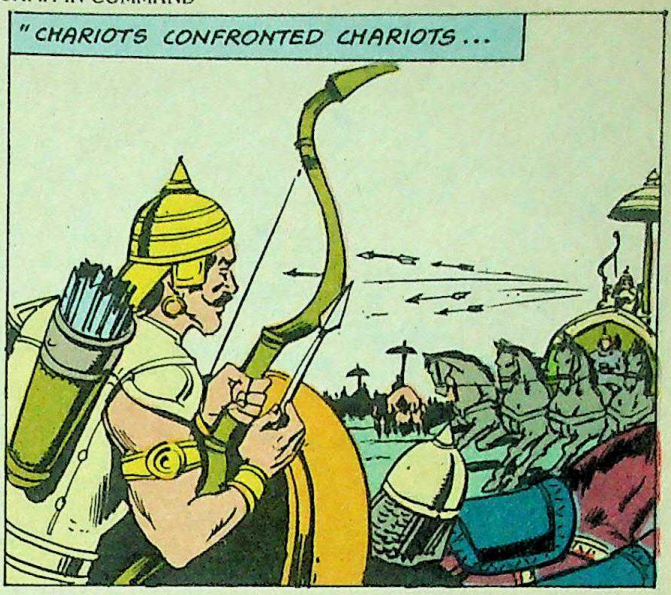

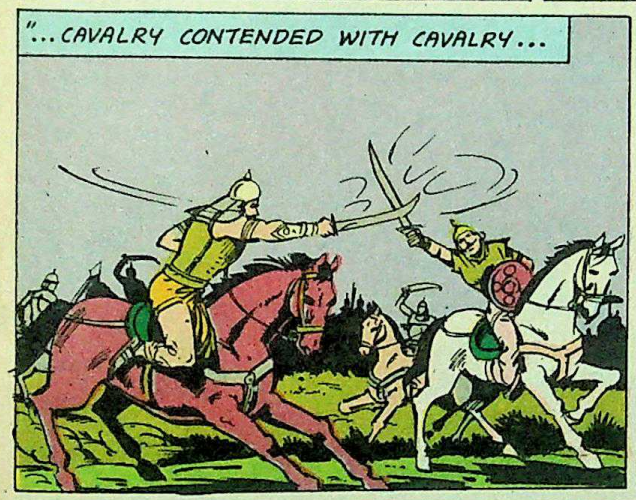

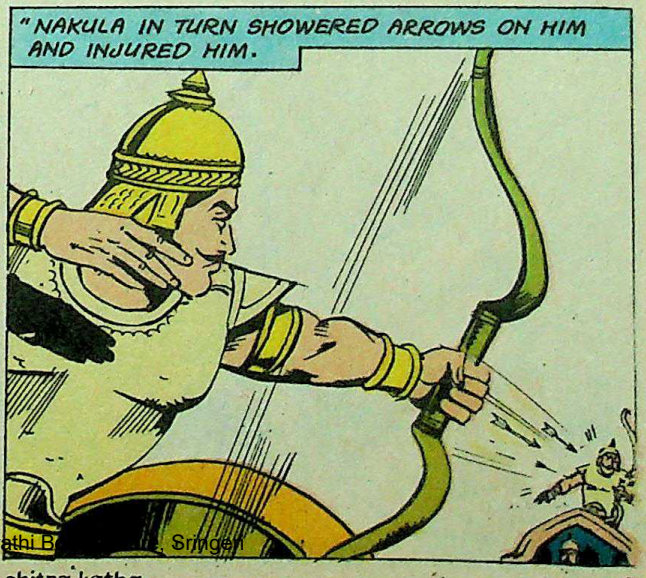

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"SHALYA SHATTERED THE BOW OF YUDHISHTHIRA IN TWO...

AND YUDHISHTHIRA, TAKING ANOTHER BOW, RETALIATED BY ENVELOPING HIM WITH ARROWS.

"DRONA ATTACKED DHRISHTADYUMNA AND DESTROYED HIS BOW.

"SHIKHANDI AND ASHWATTHAMA ENGAGED IN A FIERCE BATTLE...

"...AND INFLICTED WOUNDS ON EACH OTHER.

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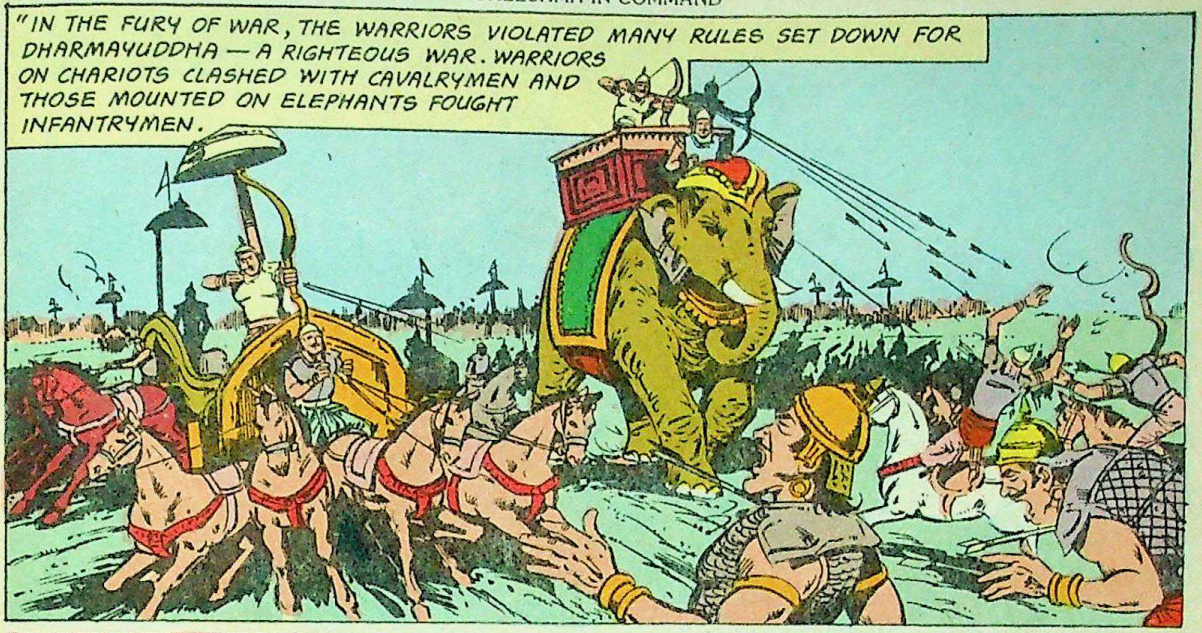

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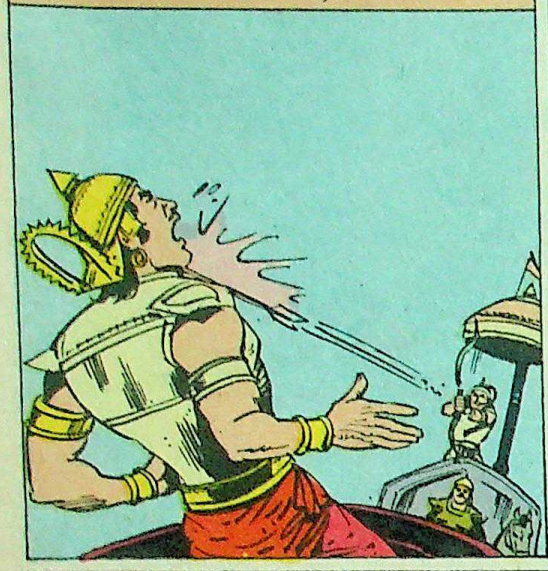
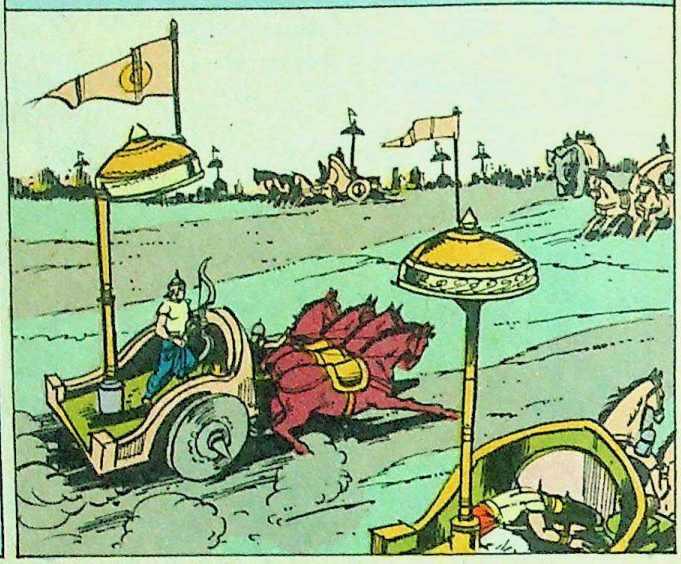
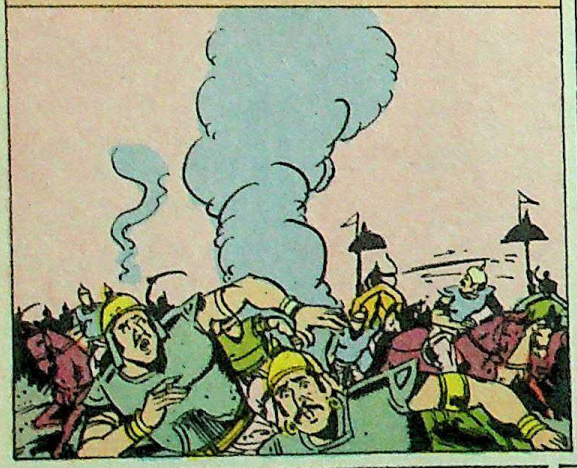
"SHALYA SHOT UTTARA THE PRINCE OF THE MATSYA KINGDOM, DEAD.



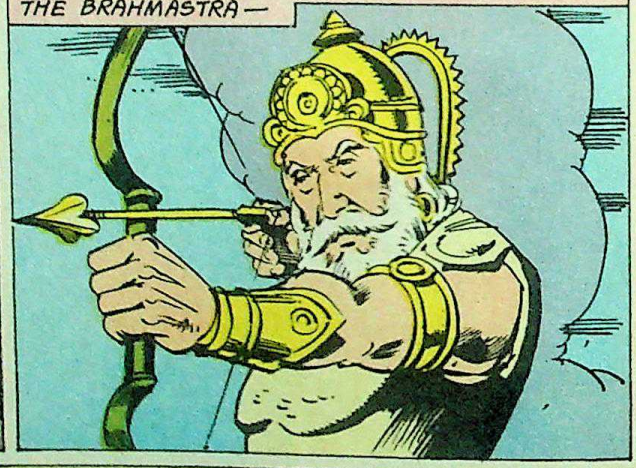
THEREUPON, UTTARA'S BROTHER SHWETA CAME UP IN A WILD FURY TO ATTACK THE KAURAVAS.



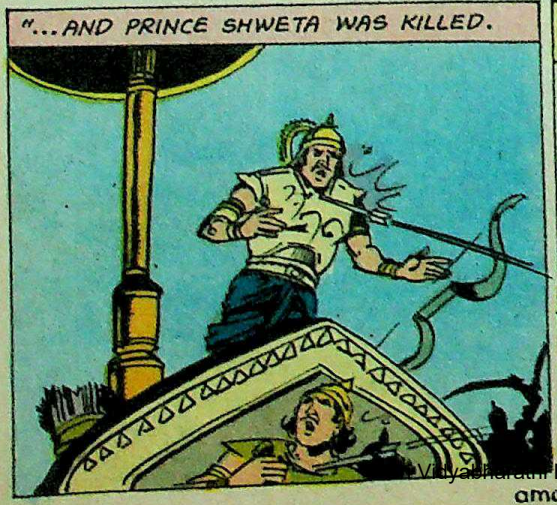
"THE KAURAVA ARMY BEGAN TO SCATTER BEFORE THE FIERCENESS OF HIS WRATH.



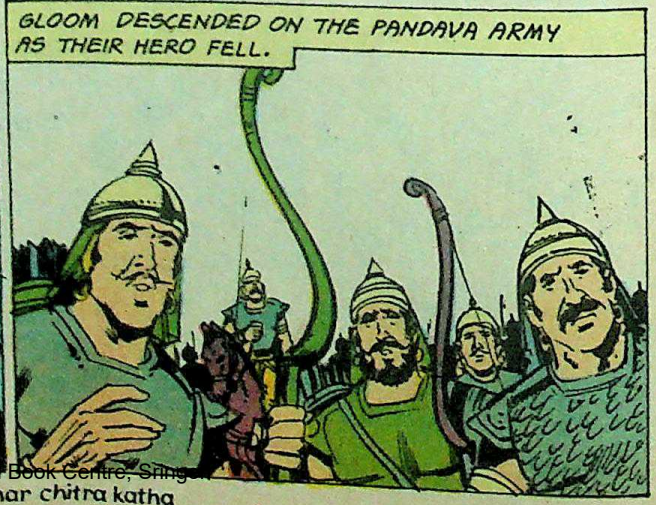
"SEEING THE WHOLE ARMY RETREATING IN FEAR OF SHWETA, THE MIGHTY BHEESHMA RELEASED THE BRAHMASTRA—



"...AND PRINCE SHWETA WAS KILLED.



GLOOM DESCENDED ON THE PANDAVA ARMY AS THEIR HERO FELL.



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"THE DISHEARTENED PANDAVAS RETURNED TO THEIR CAMP AT THE END OF THE DAY. YUDHISHTHIRA LAMENTED —

O KRISHNA, BHEESHMA WROUGHT HAVOC UPON OUR ARMY TODAY. IF THIS CONTINUES, WE SHALL CERTAINLY BE ANNIHILATED AT HIS HANDS.

DO NOT WORRY, YUDHISHTHIRA. YOU HAVE VALIANT HEROES IN YOUR ARMY WHO WILL NOT HESITATE TO LAY DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR YOUR SAKE.

"ON THE SECOND DAY OF THE WAR, DHRISHTADYUMNA, THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, INSTILLED HOPE IN THE PANDAVA ARMY.

TODAY I SHALL CONFRONT THE MIGHTY BHEESHMA, KRIPA, DRONA, SHALYA AND JAYADRATHA.

"THE LOUD BLOWING OF CONCH SHELLS SIGNALLED THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR.

"THE TWO ARMIES CHARGED AGAINST EACH OTHER.

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"IN THE INITIAL COMBAT, THE PANDAVA ARMY SUFFERED DEFEAT AND HAD TO WITHDRAW. ARJUNA SAW THIS AND SAID TO KRISHNA —

TAKE MY CHARIOT CLOSE TO BHEESHMA. I MUST STOP HIM FROM DESTROYING OUR ARMY.

"IN THE COMBAT BETWEEN BHEESHMA AND ARJUNA, KRISHNA WAS WOUNDED.

"HIGHLY ENRAGED, ARJUNA SHOT AT BHEESHMA'S CHARIOTEER AND WOUNDED HIM.

"ELSEWHERE, DRONA AND DHRISHTADYUMNA ENGAGED IN COMBAT.

"BHEEMA WAS ON A KILLING SPREE.

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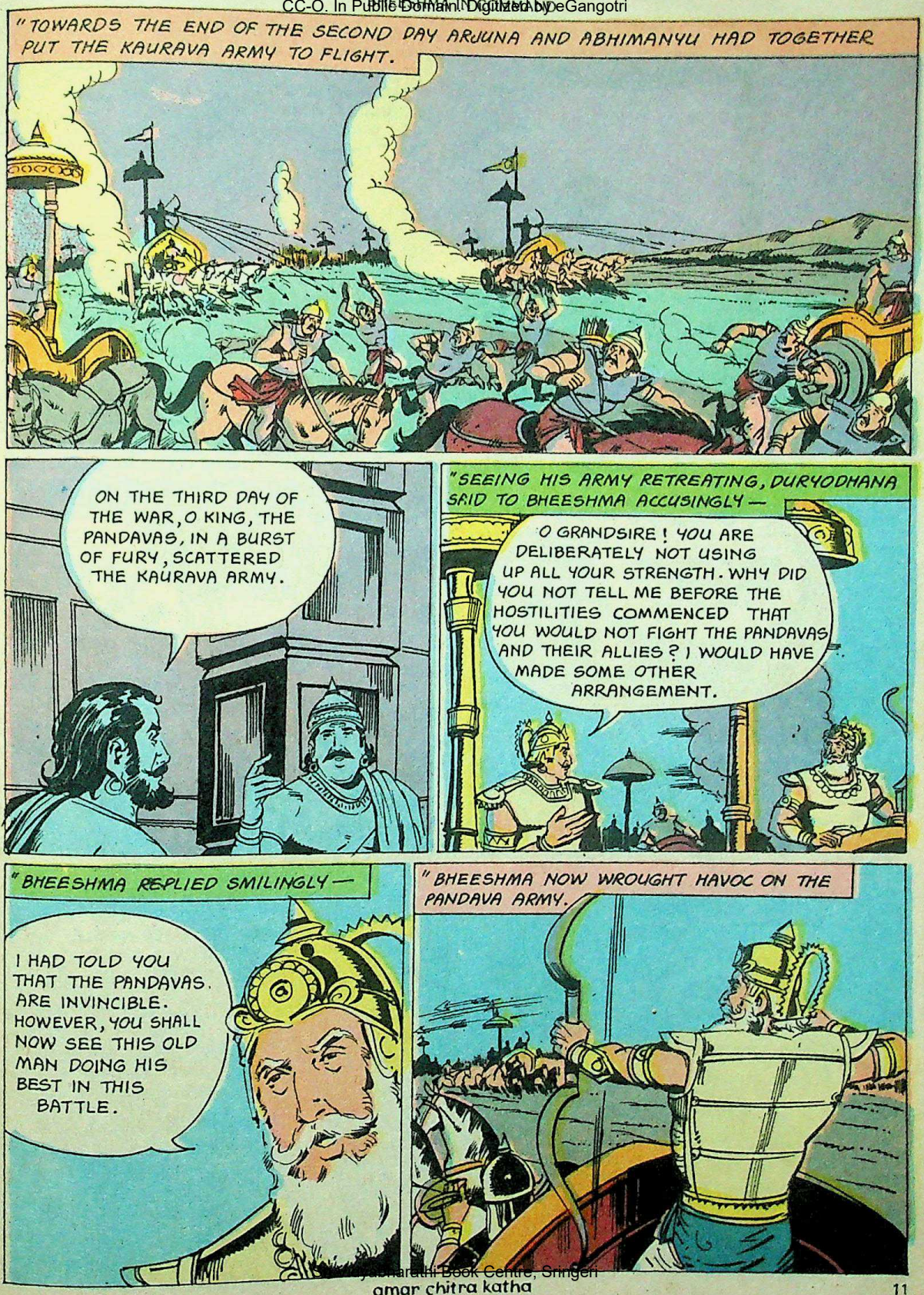

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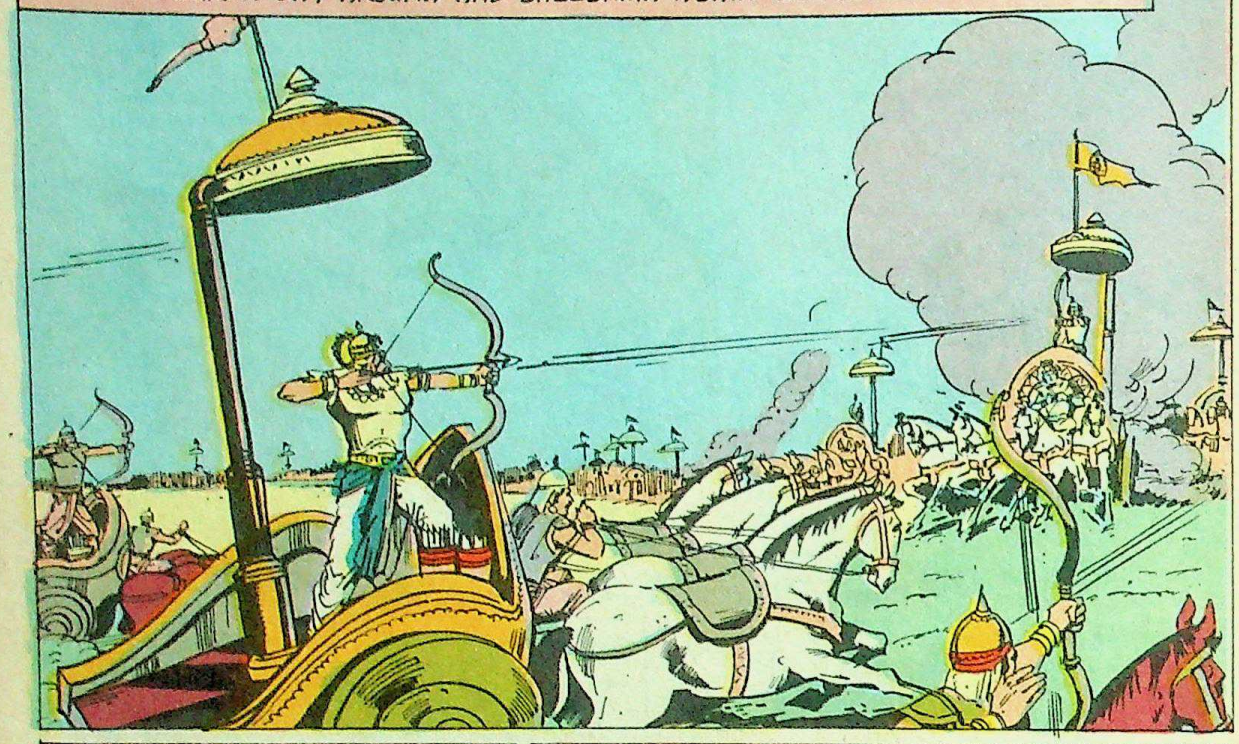
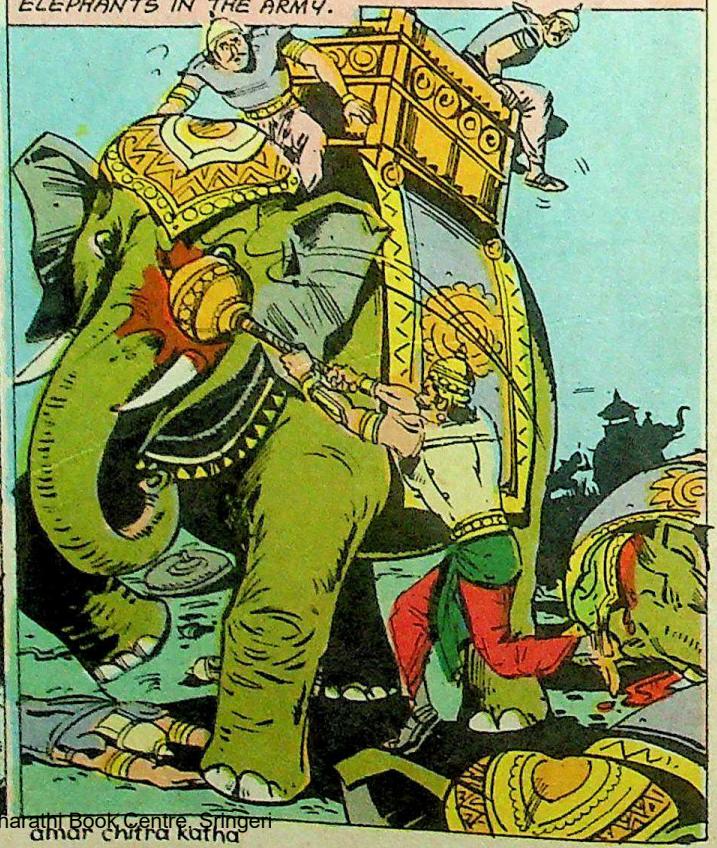
"ON THE FOURTH DAY ARJUNA AND BHEESHMA FROM CONFRONTED EACH OTHER.



"DHRISHTADYUMNA FOUGHT WITH SHALYA ...

"... WHILE BHEEMA LET LOOSE HIS FURY AGAINST THE ELEPHANTS IN THE ARMY.



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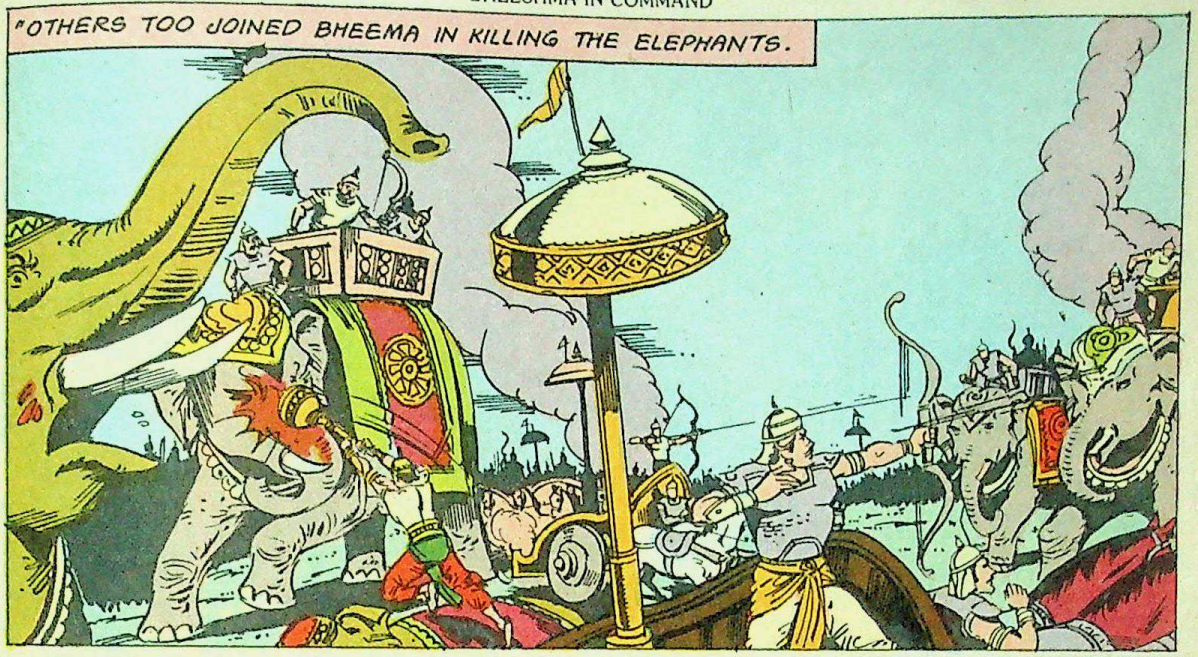

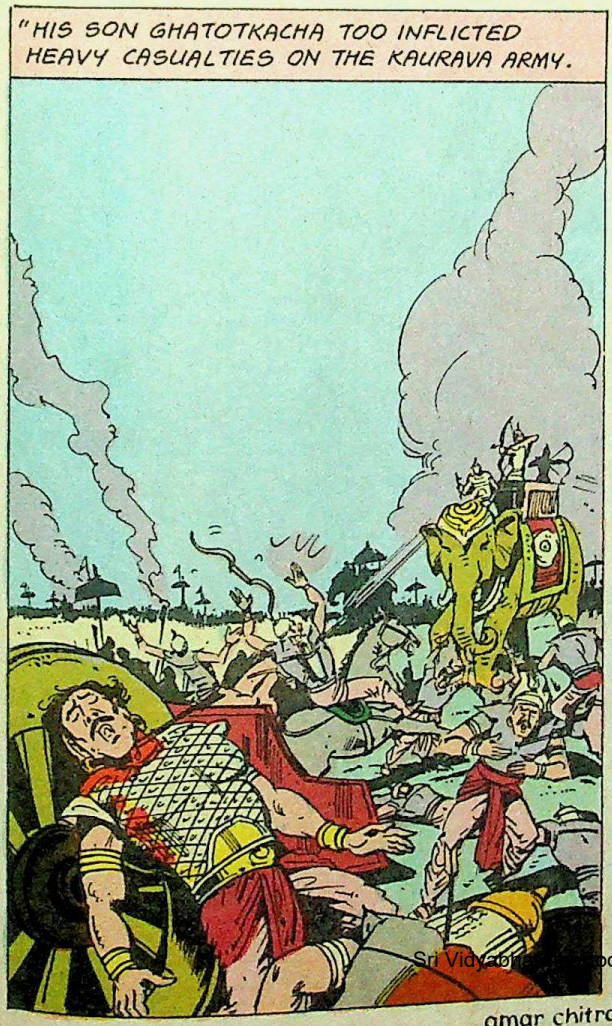

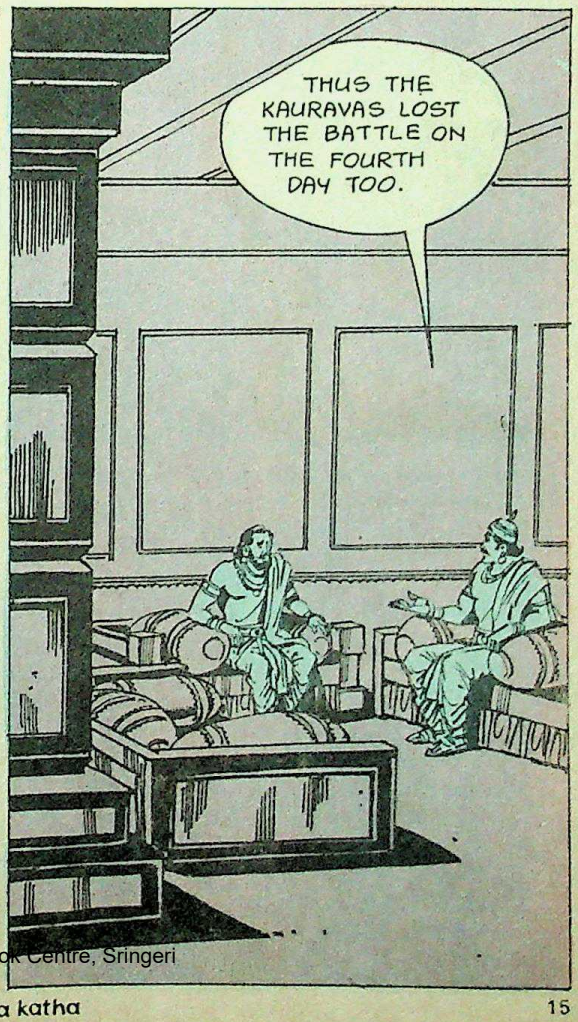

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"ON THE FIFTH DAY, VIRATA FACED BHEESHMA...

"... BHEEMA FACED DURYODHANA...

"... WHILE SINGLE-HANDEDLY ABHIMANYU CONTENDED WITH SEVERAL OF DHRITARASHTRA'S SONS.

"ON THIS DAY ARJUNA KILLED THOUSANDS OF KAURAVAS RIDING IN THEIR CHARIOTS.

"EXHAUSTED, BOTH ARMIES RETURNED TO THEIR RESPECTIVE CAMPS AT SUNDOWN.

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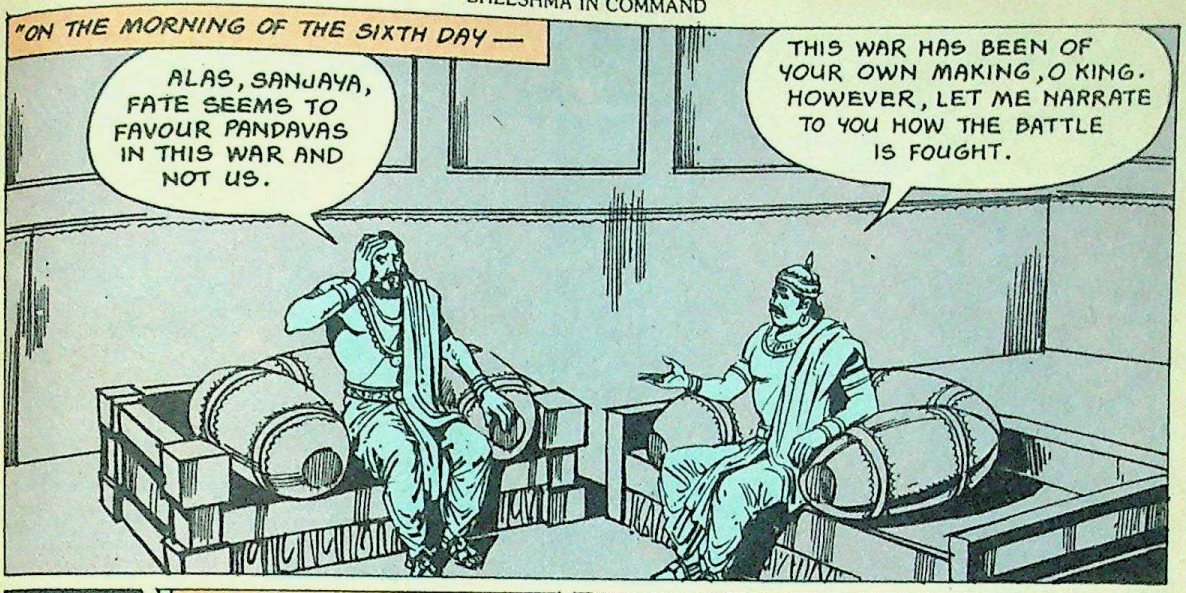

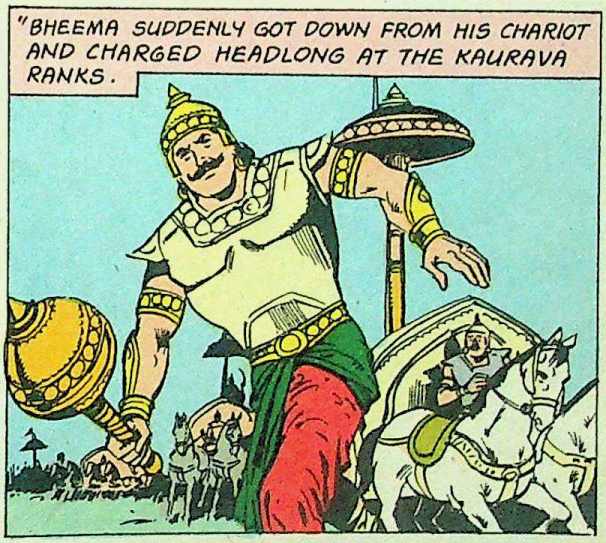

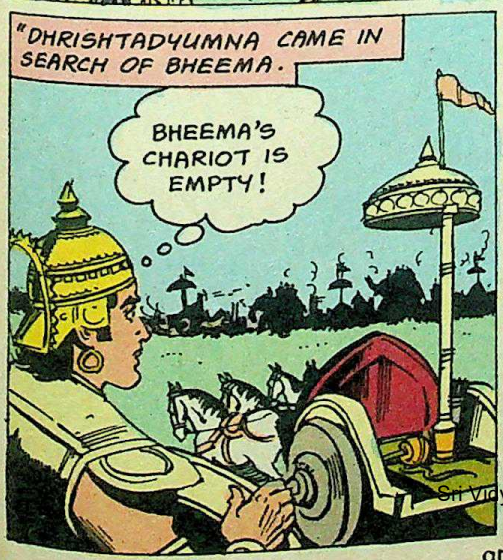

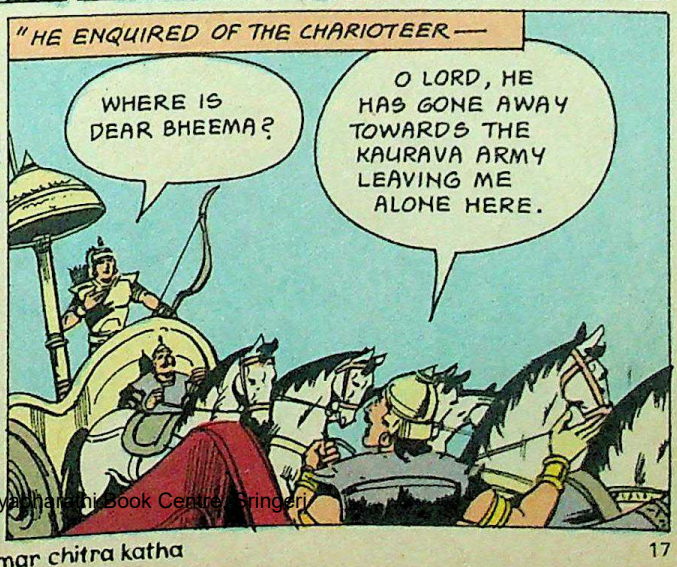

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"ON REACHING THE CAMP DURYODHANA SAID TO BHEESHMA —

I AM AFRAID OF BHEEMA'S RAGE. O GRANDSIRE, UNDER YOUR GUIDANCE I WISH TO KILL THE PANDAVAS.

"BHEESHMA REASSURED HIM.

DO NOT WORRY, O PRINCE. I WILL DO MY BEST TO CARRY OUT YOUR WISH.

"BHEESHMA THEN GAVE DURYODHANA AN OINTMENT TO HEAL HIS WOUNDS.

"THE TWO ARMIES FEELING REFRESHED IN THE MORNING AGAIN FACED EACH OTHER ON THE SEVENTH DAY...

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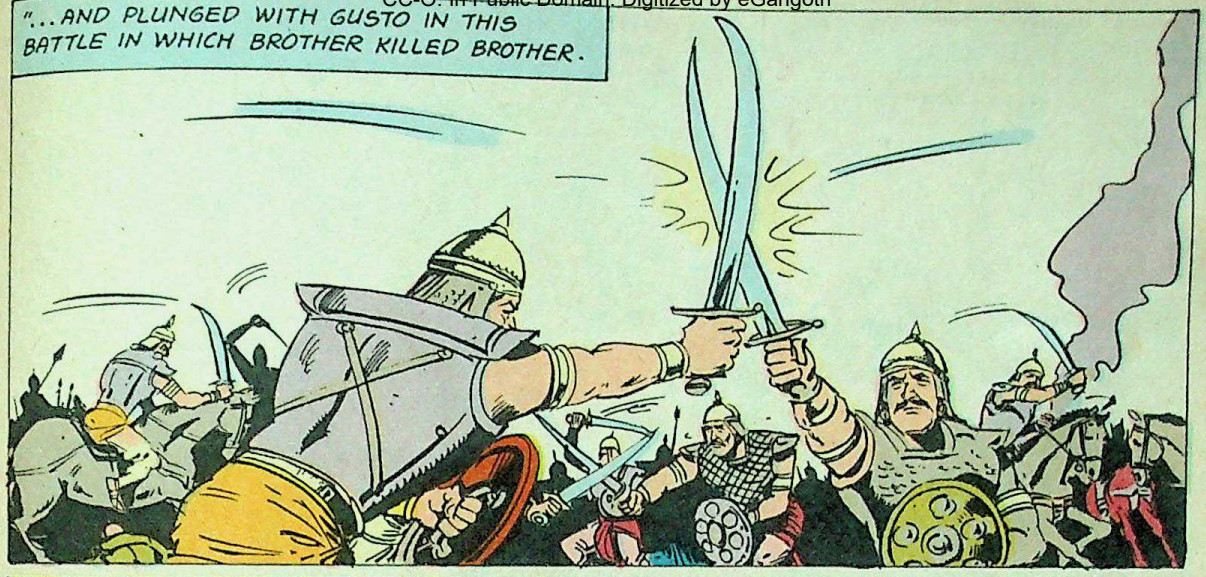
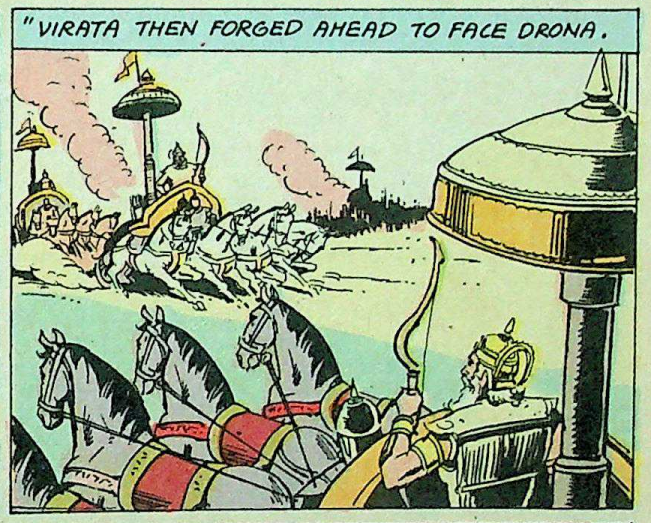
"...AND PLUNGED WITH GUSTO IN THIS BATTLE IN WHICH BROTHER KILLED BROTHER.



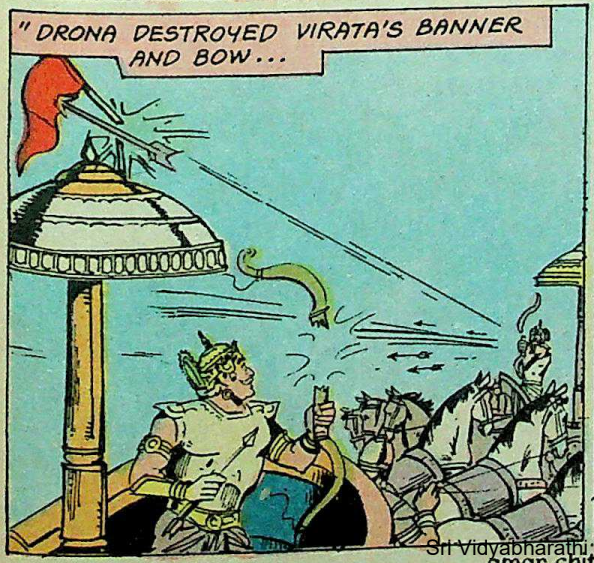
"DURYODHANA ANNOUNCED —

"O HEROES! PROTECT BHEESHMA FOR HE IS DETERMINED TO FIGHT ARJUNA TO THE FINISH.

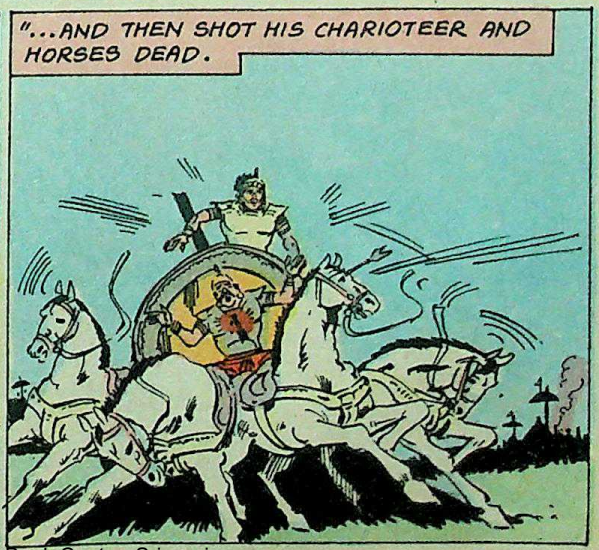
"VIRATA THEN FORGED AHEAD TO FACE DRONA.



"DRONA DESTROYED VIRATA'S BANNER AND BOW...



"...AND THEN SHOT HIS CHARIOTEER AND HORSES DEAD.



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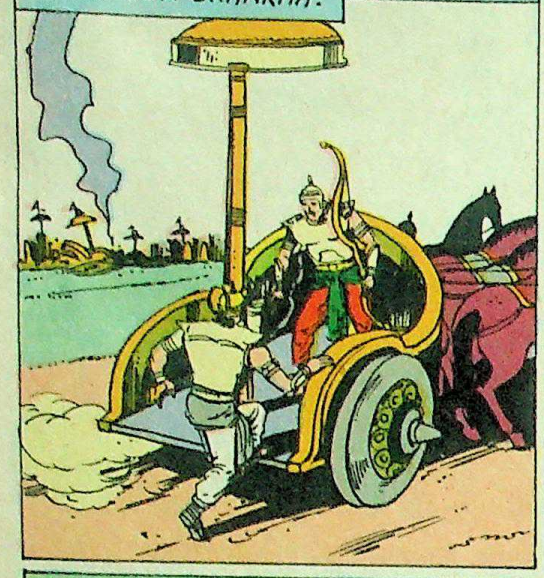
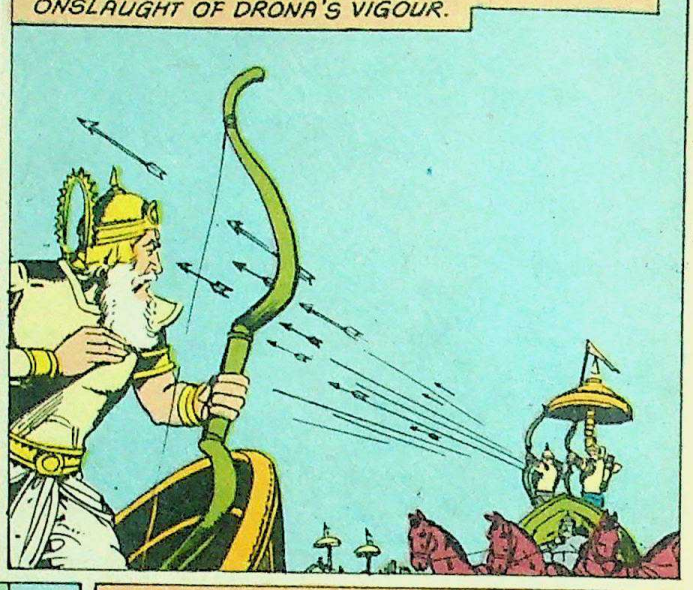
"VIRATA GOT ON TO THE CHARIOT OF HIS SON SHANKHA.

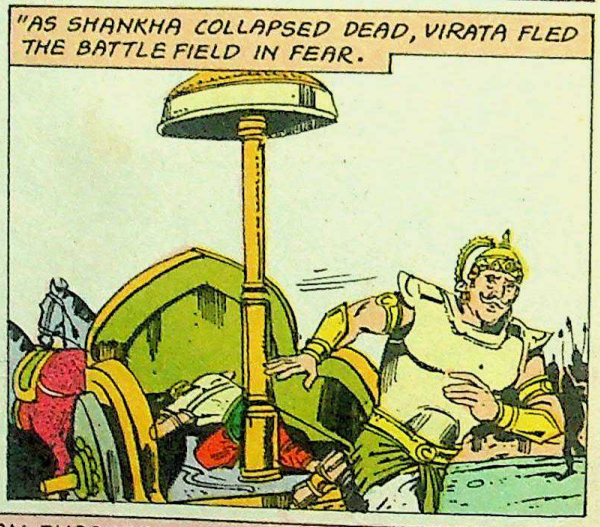


"FATHER AND SON TOGETHER RESTRAINED THE ONSLAUGHT OF DRONA'S VIGOUR.



"DRONA RETALIATED BY SHOOTING A POISONOUS ARROW AT SHANKHA.

"AS SHANKHA COLLAPSED DEAD, VIRATA FLED THE BATTLE FIELD IN FEAR.



"SHIKHANDI WOUNDED ASHWATTHAMA IN HIS FOREHEAD.

"AN ENRAGED ASHWATTHAMA SHOT SHIKHANDI'S CHARIOTEER AND HORSES DEAD.

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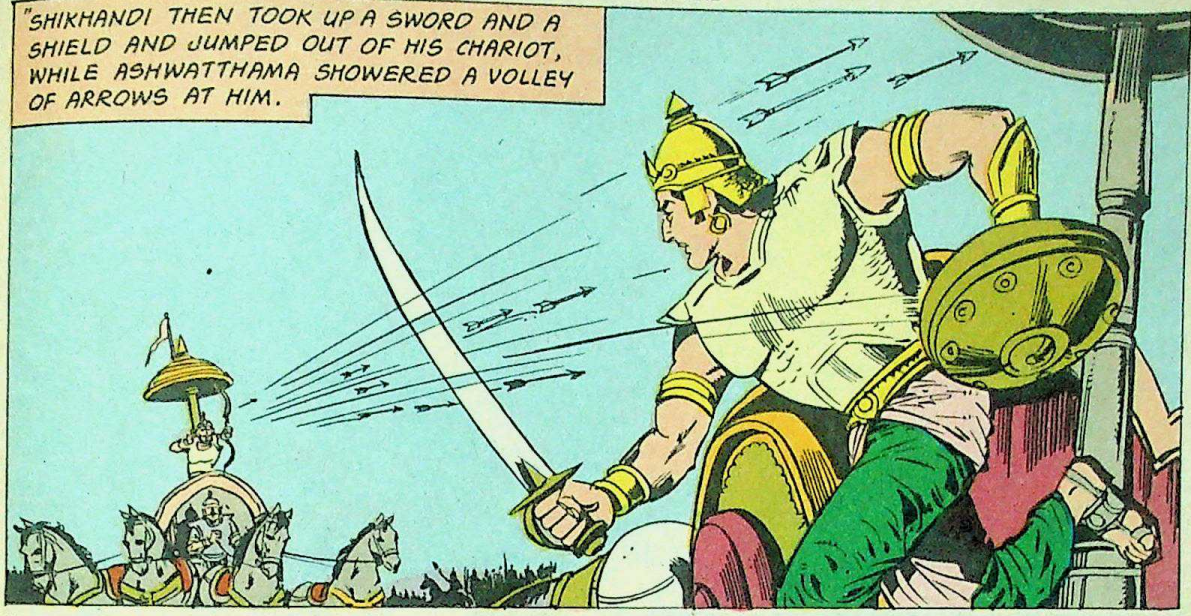

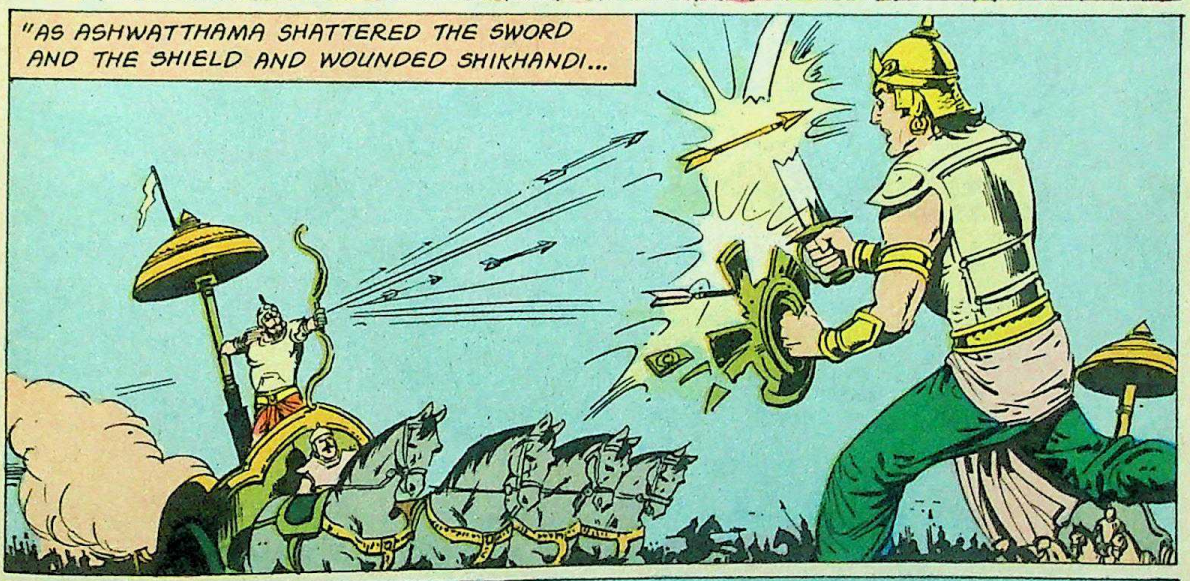

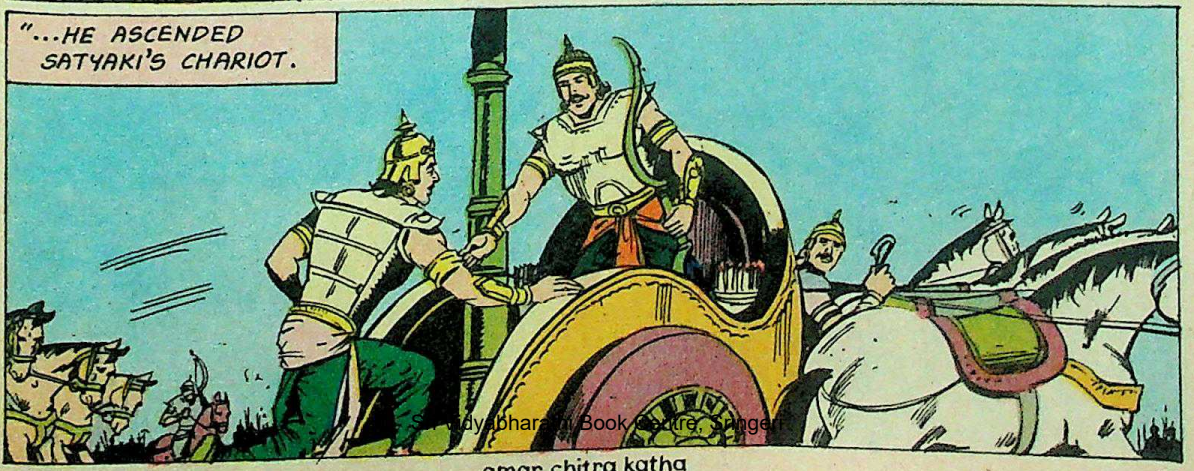

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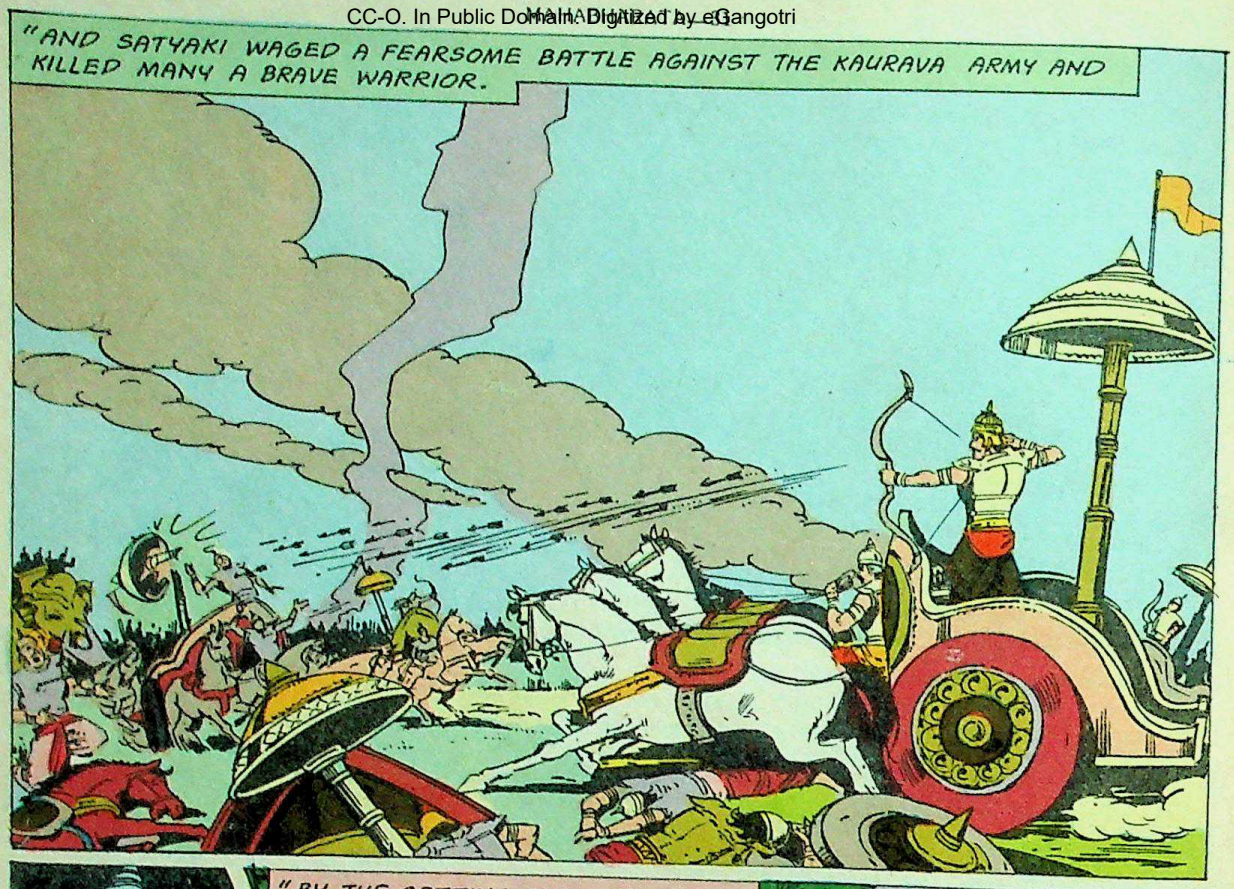

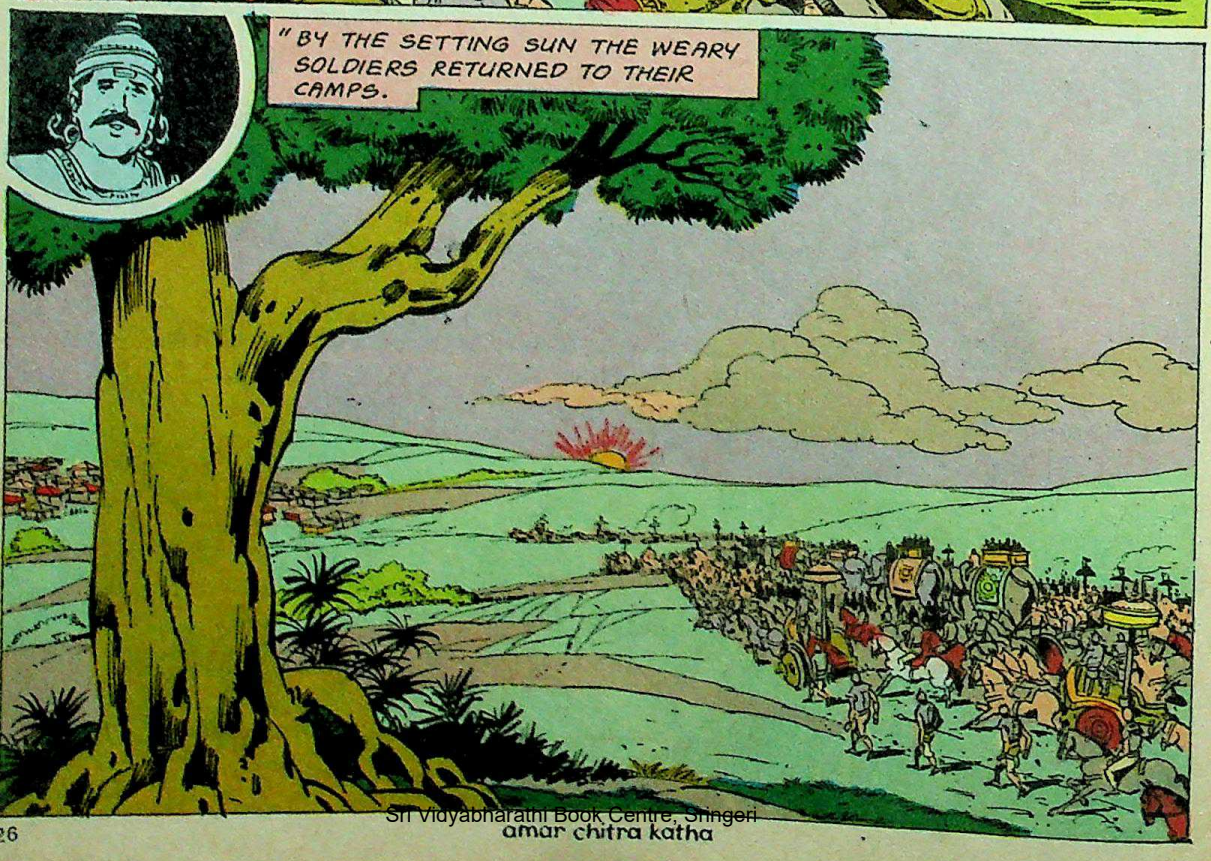

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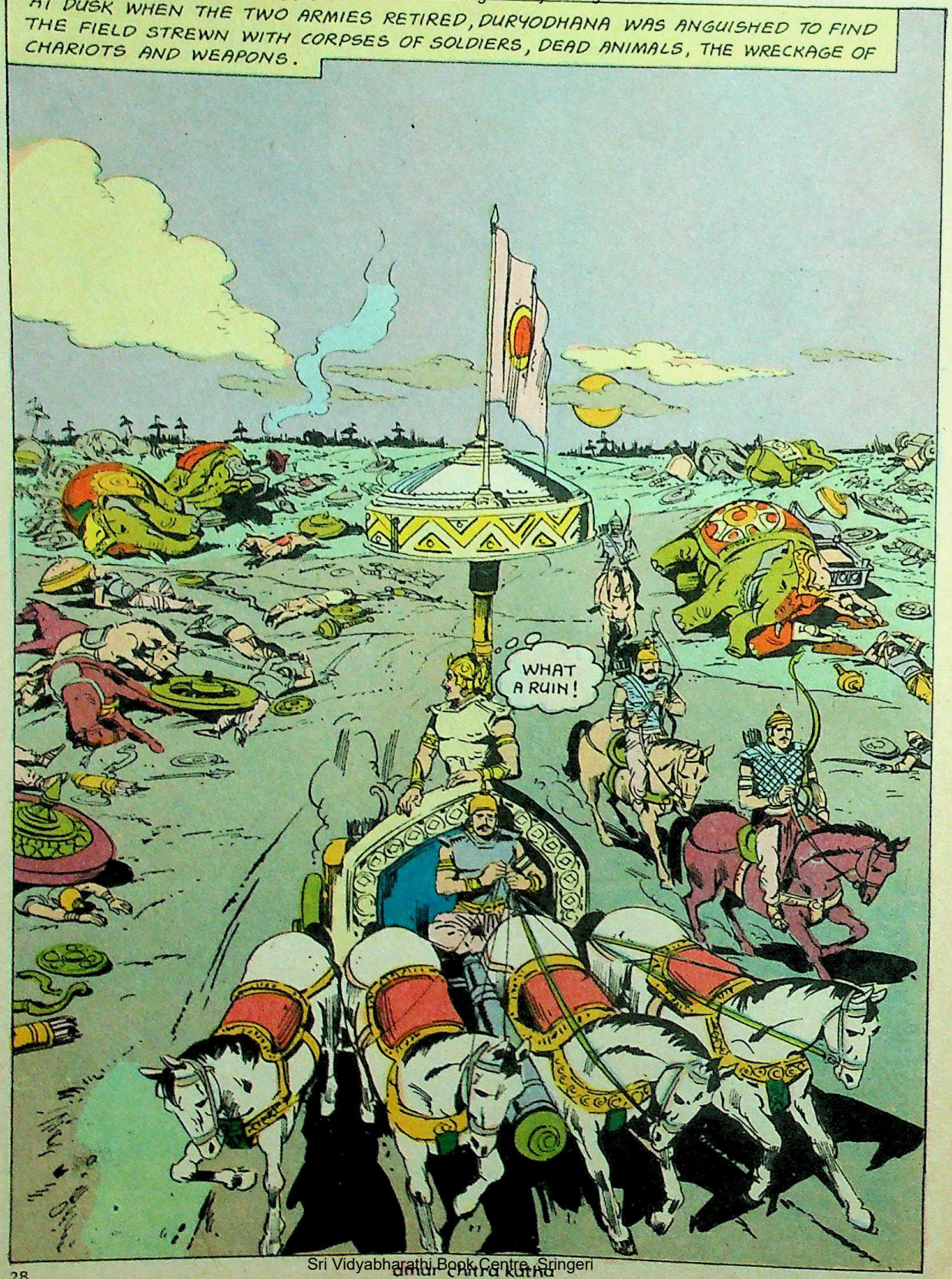

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"DURYODHANA GOT BACK TO HIS CAMP AND SPOKE TO DUHSHASANA.

BHEESHMA HAS PROMISED TO KILL ALL THE PANDAVAS TOMORROW. THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY WHICH WE HAVE AWAITED FOR YEARS.

BHEESHMA WILL NOT FIGHT SHIKHANDI. SO CHOOSE THE BEST OF OUR WARRIORS AND LET THEM GIVE THE BEST POSSIBLE PROTECTION TO BHEESHMA FROM SHIKHANDI TOMORROW.

VERY WELL.

"ON THE NINTH DAY AS THE TWO ARMIES STOOD FACING EACH OTHER, ARJUNA SAW BHEESHMA PLACED UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE MIGHTIEST OF THE KAURAVAS.

"HE THEN TOLD DHRISHTADYUMNA, THE PANDAVA COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF —

PLACE SHIKHANDI AGAINST BHEESHMA TODAY. I WILL PROTECT HIM FROM BHEESHMA.

THE NINTH MORNING OF THE WAR, O KING, THUS SAW THE KAURAVA AND THE PANDAVA ARMIES, FIRMLY RESOLVED TO KILL OR BE KILLED.

"THUS ENDS THE THIRTY-FIRST SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, THE MAHABHARATA."

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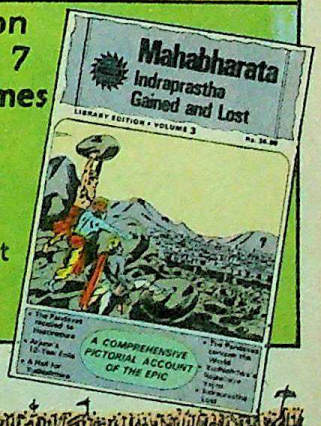

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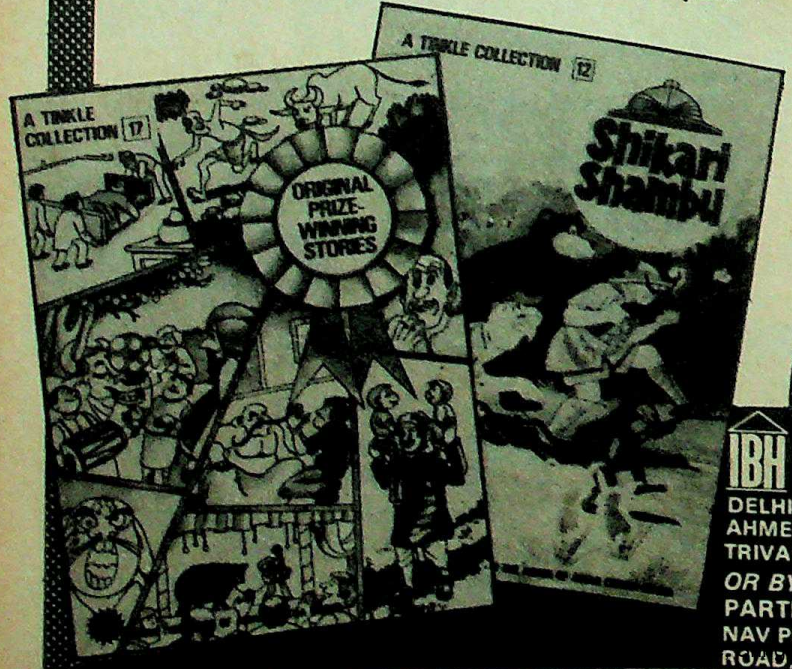

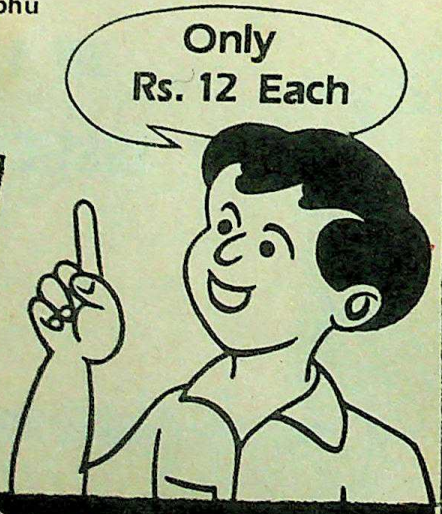

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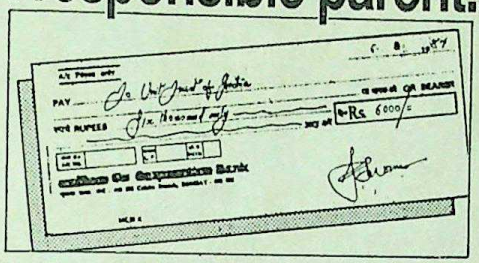

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